

Brexit stage left

Editorial

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On the 29th of March 2017 the British government invoked article 50 of the Treaty of the European Union, triggering a two year period of negotiations before Britain exits from the European Union. Hardly in doubt since the outcome of the national referendum, Britain's eventual exit from the political and economic union is now all but certain.

Brexit will have a profound impact on economics, trade and international relations not only within Europe but globally, as the changing relationship between several of the globe's major economic powers ripples across the international economy. It is unclear what kind of compromise if any will emerge over the next two years; lurking in the background of negotiation is the spectre of World Trade Organisation trading rules and punitive trading conditions – a looming cliff edge beyond which the UK plummets out of existing treaties. Nevertheless what Brexit means for business in the UK and beyond has become clearer in recent months, and what it means is prolonged uncertainty. The shape of the final settlement will likely evolve during the years and decades following Brexit itself. Uncertainty itself is becoming the defining context of international business in the wake of the British referendum vote, and business success over the next decade may come to turn on management of uncertainty and mitigation of risk.

Much of the discourse around Brexit has been driven by traditional industries: fishing, farming and manufacturing. The long-drawn out decline of these industries across Europe over the past half-century has led to ongoing restructuring of local economies across the poorer areas of many European countries. Yet if the control of Brussels has often been equated naively with the over-regulation of traditional industries, it is in the information industries that European regulation has had a wider influence in recent decades. The European Union has proven itself to be the key global power willing and able to tackle the hegemony of leading players in the tech industry. While its antitrust rulings and privacy regulation have not always been welcomed by an industry that has traditionally aligned itself with the libertarian small-government perspective of the US West Coast culture, it is undeniable that the European Union has shaped the global structure of the tech and information industries through defining the conditions on trade within its economic block.

There are three examples of the ways in which the EU has exerted its influence with global consequences. In the late 1990s the European Commission began investigating alleged anti-competitive practices undertaken by Microsoft – then the World's leading software company and globally dominant owing to the success of Windows and Office productivity software. The case initially turned on the bundling of the Microsoft Media Player with Windows, and the finding against Microsoft in 2003 and 2004 led to fines approaching €1bn. Microsoft published a stinging critique of the decision which concluded in the following terms:

We live in a world in which most products result from combining a variety of individual components. Indeed, product innovation results in no small measure from such integration [...] The Decision opens the door to intrusive regulation of product design – not to mention a record fine [...] Such a result, if allowed to stand, would almost certainly spell bad news for the European and global economies (Microsoft, 2004).

Subsequent legal action in 2008 and 2009 addressed the Open Office document format and the bundling of Internet Explorer in Windows, leading ultimately to the ballot-box browser selection screen in European versions of Windows (a decision that eventually expired in 2014).

The legal action had significant consequences for Microsoft in Europe. The popularity of Internet Explorer – which once had perhaps as much as 90% of the browser market share - declined rapidly in the wake of the EU ruling, and while this was almost certainly driven by other factors including the launch of Google's Chrome in 2008 and Microsoft's slow response to the challenge of mobile computing platforms, the context of web access and use is now very different than it was a decade ago. Microsoft was once widely regarded as the major threat to open standards in the development of the public Internet and World Wide Web, but that view now feels quaint and antiquated.

After the Microsoft case the European Commission turned its attention to Google, and its dominant position in the mobile internet and mobile computing industry. Google launched Android – its open source mobile operating system – in 2008 partly in response to the resurgence of Apple through its iPhone product. Although technically open source, Google's control over android is in part exerted through the licencing and bundling of services including the successful Google Play store. The commercial interest of Google in Android is not in the operating system itself, but in driving users to its services, particularly its advertising services. In 2015 the European Commission began an investigation into Google's alleged abuse of its dominant market position. The legal action, still ongoing, turns on the question of whether the bundling of apps with the Android operating system involves and anticompetitive abuse of market dominance.

The third area in which the European Union has challenged the structure of the information industry is in its regulation of personal data and protection of privacy. It has in recent years forced changes around the use of cookies requiring an opt-in from service users (See: ICO, 2012), addressed direct marketing, and enforced the right to be forgotten in web search engine indexes. This focus on privacy and personal data has recently come to the fore with the General Data Protection Regulations which come into force across the EU next year and enshrine a right to be forgotten within the data protection principles.

Brexit will change the ways in which some of these legal protections function in the UK context – although quite how and to what degree remains unclear. The GDPR provides an interesting case study of this potential impact. Whether the GDPR will continue to apply in Britain after March 2019 is currently uncertain; a statement by the Information Commissioner in September 2016 was equivocal on the point (Denham, 2016). While the existing Data Protection Act (1998) may remain sufficient to allow European companies to share personal data with companies in the UK and vice versa, meaning there may be no strong economic reasons for the UK to adopt additional regulation around the right to be forgotten. On the other hand the GDPR will come into force in the UK before Brexit takes place, and the Great Repeal Bill promised by the government (which is intended to embed European legislation into British statute law) may bring the provisions of the GDPR into UK law. There may be no very strong motivation to repeal that regulation subsequently. The extent to which those provisions will factor in the UK context remains uncertain. Nevertheless recent research suggests that a significant number of British companies have already concluded that the GDPR will not apply in the long term, and stopped all planning and preparation for the change (Rossi, 2017).

Brexit will have an impact on this framework for international regulation of the information industries, although what kind of impact is unclear. It will not stop the EU developing its regulation around data protection, privacy, and anti-trust in the information sector. However if Britain repositions itself towards the US as seems one possibility, Brexit may alter the balance of power

between the United States and the European Union in the development and regulation of the information and tech sectors. This may have significant consequences for the future development of the tech and information industries. What emerges from this situation will be an evolution of existing relationships rather than a negotiation, perhaps without involving clear political strategy of public debate. The GDPR again provides a useful case study: while the outcome remains uncertain, the fact of that uncertainty and the subsequent malaise to the changing legislative field itself creates political pressure that inevitably distances Britain practice from the European consensus.

This adds-up to an uncertainty that will not be fully resolved during the Article 50 negotiations or immediately after; what legislation is incorporated into British law and how that legislation changes in the period after Brexit are just the foundations on which that future uncertainty will resolve itself. The kinds of trading relationship that will exist in 2019 will merely be the start of a process of continental realignment of industry and commerce in the years to follow. At Business Information Review we have resisted commenting on Brexit up until this point because of the lack of clarity about the eventual outcomes of the process. We do so now with the growing recognition that lack of clarity is precisely what is coming to define the Brexit process and its impact on the commercial. The challenge for the future is to own uncertainty as a defining quality of the commercial context and develop ways to mitigate its impact and confront the potential of significant regulatory change.

Business Information Review Blog

The Business Information Review Blog has evolved over the years from a current awareness platform to a site that supports and widens the content of the journal. As a part of this development we are very pleased to announce the redesign and relaunch of the blog. All the historical context is still available at our new home, but from now on the Business Information Review Blog can be found at www.businessinformationreview.org.uk.

The aim of the blog is to support and complement the content of the journal. The blog carries content that sometimes elaborates on that found inside the pages of the journal, sometimes provides a preview, and sometimes just addresses emerging issues that have not yet found there way into print. We hope the new platform for the blog will provide a new home for the community of readers, writers, professionals and scholars that *Business Information Review* has fostered over the decades.

Business Information Review best paper prize

We're delighted to announce the winner of the 2016 BIR Best Paper Prize. This year's field was very strong, and in recognition of this we've recognising two runner-up papers each of which was highly commended by the editors and editorial board. Both the runner-up papers were published in our special issue on information security

The first runner-up is Nick Wilding's paper "Cyber Resilience: How Important is Your Reputation? How Effective Are Your People" (33 (2): 94 – 99). Nick Wilding is Head of Cyber Resilience at AXELOS Global Best Practice – a joint venture company set up in 2013 and co-owned by the UK Government and Capita plc. Nick is responsible for RESILIA™ Global Best Practice – a portfolio of cyber resilience best practice publications, certified training, all staff awareness learning and leadership engagement tools designed to put the 'human factor' at the centre of your cyber resilience strategy. In his paper Nick argues for a move from thinking about cyber security to thinking about cyber resilience and

outlines the guiding principles of cyber awareness learning, training and education. The paper was strongly commended by the editorial board of *Business Information Review* for its accessible and thorough analysis of the human factors in information security.

The second runner-up is Danny Budzak's paper: 'Information Security: the People Issue'. Danny's paper examined the information security issues raised by the involvement of people with information systems. It set-out the threats to information systems, and the risks associated with information systems, before addressing the mitigation of those threats through managing roles, responsibilities, relationships and training. The paper was again commended by the editorial board for its accessible and thorough approach.

But the winner of the 2016 Business Information Review best paper prize is Siân Tyrrell's paper "From passenger to pilot – Taking the lead and building a business critical information management strategy". In this article, Sian shared her experiences and explored the steps needed to develop and implement an effective information strategy from scratch. She considered the challenges in different type of environment having worked in both public and private sectors within large and small information teams. She made suggestions for adapting approaches to ensure that the information strategy developed is fit for purpose regardless of the type of organization or their position in regards to the importance of an information strategy. Siân's paper exemplifies the strengths of *Business Information Review*, combining professional insight with practical and accessible practitioner led research, and we're very pleased to see it join our list of annual best papers.

The BIR Annual Survey

The next issue of Business Information Review features the BIR Annual survey. The Survey has been an annual feature of the journal for almost thirty years, and is now the longest running continuous survey of business information needs in the world. The 2017 survey incorporates a number of changes which we hope will improve the survey and increase its relevance and usefulness. We think the annual survey will become an invaluable source in evidencing business value and business benefits accruing from embedded information and knowledge management services. In recognition of this shift, and to better align with the business year, we have moved the publication from March to September. As the initial findings of survey start to emerge, we've become very excited about the ways in which they are beginning to shape-up.

June 2017 Business Information Review

June's *Business Information Review* features a familiarly eclectic mix of papers and topics to mitigate the uncertainty engendered by the political world. The first article in this issue is by Henry Boateng from the University of Technology Sydney in Australia, and Abednego Feehi Okoe and Tiniwah Deborah Mensah from the University of Technical Studies Accra in Ghana. Entitled *The Relationship between Human Resource practices and Knowledge sharing in service firms*, the paper examines the effects of job satisfaction, employee commitment, workplace friendship and team culture on knowledge sharing in the service industries. The study finds that these factors play an important role in the willingness of employees to share their expert knowledge, and recommends the importance workplace teams and team culture in facilitating knowledge management strategies.

Manny Cohen, Chairman of Armadillo Business Information, provides the second of our papers this issue, bringing personal and professional experience to the question of fake news in the commercial

information environment. Fake news has begun to dominate the agenda in response to recent political upheavals, such as the US Presidential elections and the Brexit referendum discussed in this editorial. Entitled *Fake news and manipulated data, Individual access and the future of information* Manny Cohen explores the relationship between fee and free in the digital economy and the underlying causes of the emergence of fake news and inaccurate information, in a provocative critique of the culture of the information industry.

Our third paper is from Jonathan Engel, Director and Chief Information Architect at InfoArk. Under the title, *Improving retrieval of structured and unstructured information: Practical steps for better classification, navigation and search*, the paper discussed how information architecture can improve information management processes, and help make information resources easier to search and locate. Providing a practical and useful framework for taxonomy building, the paper also addresses a case study of the development of an extended taxonomy in a global agricultural business, and the improvements in recall, precision and accuracy that resulted.

Keith Dewar's *The Value Exchange: generating trust in the digital world* is our fourth paper in June's issue. Keith Dewar is Group Marketing & Product Director of MyLife Digital, a company that provides organisations and individuals with a trusted platform built on security, convenience and control for Personal Information Management. His paper for *Business Information Review* addresses question of trust in the new digital economy of personal information. Personal information has become a kind of currency of the digital age, exchanged in return for access to products and services, and transformed into advertising and other revenues. But personal data has also become highly politicised as a consequence of concerns about privacy, surveillance, and corporate and state intrusion. Keith Dewar's paper explores the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the ways in which companies can approach rebuilding trust between themselves and individuals in the management of personal data.

Our final paper was written by Mario Oscar Steffen, Mírian Oliveira and Andrea R. Balle and addresses questions of knowledge management and knowledge sharing in science parks. Entitled *Knowledge Sharing Among Companies in a Science and Technology Park*, the research explores the question of collaboration in Brazil. As the authors note, science parks are designed to facilitate collaboration and encourage concentrations of expertise, and therefore should be expected to be sites of knowledge exchange and sharing. They find that much of the collaborative knowledge sharing related to managerial rather than technical knowledge, and reflect the desire to refine and improve existing products and services.

Martin White returns with *Perspectives* to round of June's issue of *Business Information Review*. *Perspectives* takes a broad look at emerging research in the social sciences in general, that may have escaped the attention of information professionals. This issue he draws on research published in *History of the Human Sciences*, *Journal of Service Research*, *Information Visualization*, *Organisational Psychology Review*, *Journal of Information Science*, *Communication Research*, *Organization Studies* and *Health Informatics Journal*. The column touches of issues of information overload, big data, research data management, content management systems, virtual teams, and business development. Whatever the uncertainties in the wider world *Perspectives* remains essential reading for wider professional current awareness.

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